Transcript
Dead Ladies Show Podcast Episode 46
Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven

(Dead Ladies Show Music - 'Little Lily Swing' by Tri-Tachyon)

SUSAN STONE: Welcome to the Dead Ladies Show Podcast! I'm Susan Stone. The Dead Ladies Show celebrates women – both overlooked and iconic – who achieved amazing things against all odds while they were alive. And we do it through women's history storytelling on stage, here in Berlin and beyond.

With me, in this very room, at a more or less safe distance, is Dead Ladies Show co-founder Katy Derbyshire! Hello, it's very nice to have you here!

KATY DERBYSHIRE: I know, isn't it crazy?! This is the first time we've recorded in the same place for about two years. It's very exciting.

SUSAN STONE: It's kind of wild, yes. But it's nice. It seems like you and I – and well, Florian soon – we've all been really busy with Dead Ladies stuff. And we have been recording new tales of wonderful women that we'll bring you on the podcast soon. Give us a little wrap-up of what we've been doing and what we're going to be doing.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Well, we've – since our last podcast, we've had two live shows, I believe. So we had one at a special translatorial event, the Translationale, which is really hard to pronounce. But it was a three-day translation festival by literary translators, highlighting our work (I have to say, as a literary translator). And then we had a regular show – about half an hour later, it felt like – which, we were planning to do it outside, but the weather was not planning to do that. So we went back into our ACUD studio again for who knows how long, which felt very strange but also very good. And of course, we adhere to all the rules in there, and they have a fabulous ventilation system – and ventilation is, as we know, very important. 'V' for ventilation! And we have another show coming up on the 30th of November, live in ACUD in Mitte. I think that's pretty certain to be indoors, as well.

SUSAN STONE: Yes, yes. It would be a little chilly at this stage to be outside. Yeah, it was really fun and – we had a lot of people there! Like, I was surprised. You know, they were spaced out and wearing masks, but still, you look out and, "Oh my gosh, an audience!"

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yeah, but didn't it feel great?

SUSAN STONE: It did, it did. And I gave a presentation there that's going to be on the podcast in the near future. And actually we're going to have your Translationale presentation next episode, I think! So, we'll be catching up with those. But first we'll

be going back in time for this episode, all the way back to 2019, to catch up with our delightful Dead Ladies Show co-founder Florian Duijsens.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yes! And as well as being the show's co-founder, and host (along with mysef) of most of our live shows, Florian is also an editor and translator, and a teacher at Bard College Berlin. So the presentation you're about to hear was part of the Bard College Berlin's cultural event, which is called the Pankumenta, fabulously named for the Pankow district of the city, where the school is located.

SUSAN STONE: Yeah, so, that's not where the live show was actually, that was in Neukölln. And there were also students giving short presentations about their own Dead Ladies at this event, which was great. And there are a lot of enthusiastic students cheering and gently heckling, I would say, in the audience. Noisy enthusiasm, I like to call it. And it makes for a great listen, I think you'll enjoy it.

This story is indeed a lot of fun, but there are a few dark moments, as in so many of our ladies' lives. And there are, just to let you know, a couple of mentions of suicide and suicide attempts, and we wanted to flag that for you. There are also some visual references in the first few minutes of Florian's presentation as a part of a quiz, so we'll have the images for you on our website over at deadladiesshow.com/podcast if you want to play along. And you can get ready by taking a look at them. So, go ahead, go over there! We'll wait.

Are you ready? Good. Now, here's Florian on the amazingly eclectic artist, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: Hello! Anybody here from out of town? This is not standup. This is feminism. Tonight I'll be talking about Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.

I'll start with a short quiz. Can anyone identify the artist who took this picture? [SHOWS SLIDE]

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1: Yes.

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: Oh. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I mean this picture of a women's deconstructed body, face and arms replaced by sort of a sex-doll paper cutout?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1: Baroness

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: No. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] But you know, it would have been a good guess.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2: Claude Cahun?

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: No, not Claude Cahun.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #3: Man Ray?

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: Man Ray, exactly. The model, however, the woman you see – that is Elsa. This next one is a portrait, and I'd like you to guess the artist as well as the person being portrayed, the subject. [SHOWS SLIDE].

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: The Baroness is portrayed [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], um, somehow.

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: It's not the Baroness *being* portrayed. The Baroness is doing the – she's the artist who created this piece. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] In the 1920s. And it's a portrait of Marcel Duchamp. [AUDIENCE OOHS]

And I will clarify for the listeners at home, you're looking at a wine or cocktail glass filled with some, like, flaccid feathers [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] and party decorations. Right, that seems an accurate description of what we're looking at. [AUDIENCE MURMURS IN AGREEMENT]

So the next one is an easy one. Who made this? [SHOWS SLIDE]

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1: Oh, the Baroness. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: What was that?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1: It's Marcel Duchamp. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

FLORIAN DUISENS: And no, it's not. Err, wrong! That was a trick question. This is actually by Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

This is famously known as "Fountain" by Marcel Duchamp, it's a urinal readymade. But it's not by Duchamp.

To explain how this happened, and how all of you – or many of you – were taught differently, were taught that this was by a man – I will take you back to 1874, when the real artist was born. Her name is Else Hildegard Plötz [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], she grew up in Swinemünde [SHOWS SLIDE] (which is now in Poland, in Świnoujście). Her father, who she describes as a "thick brained Teuton," was a city councilor and real-estate developer of sorts, who also owned a hotel later on – Adolf, for that was his name, was a terrible husband and abusive father, out drinking and carousing while Elsa's mother roped her two daughters into dramatic re-enactments of Goethe and Heine at home. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Elsa did resemble Adolf in one way: they both were rather scandalously antireligious. She explains: "I was on bad terms with God privately anyway—since long I scorned a silly thing like that— making animals [but] not taking them into

heaven—when often they had such a short life as it was—being mostly eaten." [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Elsa started writing poetry at the age of 12, and she started smoking at 14. A tall and skinny blonde, she was so anemic as a teen – she became dizzy just by bending down or walking stairs. She graduated at 16, moving to Berlin [SHOWS SLIDE] to become one of the youngest students at the very traditionally minded – oh, this is where she lived in Berlin. It no longer exists, that's why you're looking at an empty field [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]. So she became a student at the Königliche Kunstschule on Klosterstrasse [SHOWS SLIDE]. Sadly, she only got to finish one term, because her mother attempted suicide by walking into the Baltic Sea [SHOWS SLIDE]. Soon Elsa was stuck back home, and Adolf sent her mother to a sanatorium. There, Elsa would later write, her mother "slyly, giggling smirking gay insisted she wasn't mad. […] She began to make strange 'handiwork' […] nobody would think of putting together—spoiling elegant material with cheap trash […] My mother broke into beautiful shattered scintillating noble pieces."

When Ida, her mother, was diagnosed with advanced endometrial cancer, Elsa found out it had been caused by an untreated syphilis infection she'd gotten from Adolf. Ida died when Elsa was 19, and her father soon remarried. [SHOWS SLIDE] When Adolf turned violent and threatened Elsa with "some institution for naughty girls," she escaped using a washline (very dramatic) and made it back to Berlin. Responding to an ad for "girls with good figures," Elsa got a job at the Wintergarten theater [SHOWS SLIDE], which you see behind me. The Wintergarten theater which is still around on Potsdamer Straße, which was putting up very classy *tableaux vivants* in which largely nude women posed in scenes of a "purely artistic nature." She toured all over Germany and enjoyed her newfound freedom, as her handwritten memoir has it [SHOWS SLIDE]: "I had become mensick up to my eartips - no over the top of my head - permeating my brain stabbing out of my eyeballs - as yet only anticipatingly playful - but my homedreams of restless longing became possibilities - no, certainties!"

She was soon educated by the other girls in different means of birth control (all of them still very much illegal) and overcame various STDs. Only just 21, Elsa's only marketable skill at this point was posing. So she started a career of sorts as a muse, posing for Melchior Lechter's "Orpheus" [SHOWS SLIDE] and becoming his mistress, writing: "I was the jewel and precious of his studio; he did homage to me in every way—except the money way." [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] He was the first in a series of artists Elsa got involved with, a great many of them gay. Here's Lechter [SHOWS SLIDE], there's playwright Ernst Hardt [SHOWS SLIDE] – of sculptor and photographer Richard Schmitz no pictures exist, though Elsa also had an affair with her brother Oscar [SHOWS SLIDE], who would describe Elsa in his memoirs like this –

AUDIENCE MEMBER #5: His brother.

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: His brother, the middle one.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #5: RIght but it wasn't Elsa's brother, was it? The guy –

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: Exactly, so, sorry. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Oscar Schmitz, Richard Schmitz' brother, also slept with Elsa and wrote this about her:

"She had an unusually hard, but almost beautiful face, arranged in quattrocentric fashion […]. Her straw-colored hair lay tight around her temples, the head covered by a somewhat adventurous panama hat, as if she despised the decorative frills of loops and flowers that adorned ladies' hats *à la française*. Her clothing was austere, which suited the thin lips and the strong, but well-formed hands. […] She was not heavy, even though she wore unusually heavy jewels, an antique signet ring so large that it seemed to contain a secret compartment for poison […]. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Although she seemed to despise any sensually attractive charm, she was more provocative than the sweet pastel beauty of the courtesan."

Intriguing, right? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

In early 1900, she moved to Dachau, at that point an innocent artist colony near the very happening Munich. She writes: "I now wished to become a dashing successful and fervent female artist of applied art—it just being the time in Germany of uprearing against the degraded nonsense of modern factory style, as well as against imitated or true antiquity." In Munich, she falls for the charms of Jugendstil architect August Endell [SHOWS SLIDE]. And in 1901, Elsa proposes. Very modern. After the wedding, they move first to Wannsee, and then to Berlin Zehlendorf [SHOWS SLIDE], and Elsa changes her name to Elsa Ti Endell. Her husband would be August Tse Endell, *ti* supposedly being the Chinese word for yellow, the color of royalty, and *tse* the male equivalent.

Yet, although her husband was doing well in Berlin (he did the first courtyard [SHOWS SLIDE] of the Hackesche Höfe), the marriage was a dud, as August was impotent (or sexually uninterested). To save their marriage, he sent Elsa to a sanatorium [SHOWS SLIDE] to have her womb massaged. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] But when he later introduced Elsa to the tall and elegant Felix Paul Greve [SHOWS SLIDE], she was smitten, quickly negotiating an open marriage and chasing him for a year. As the translator of Oscar Wilde and André Gide, Felix certainly also flirted with homosexuality, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] but on Christmas Eve 1902, Elsa had her way with him.

Enraptured by Elsa, Felix sneakily convinced his longtime companion, Herman, to pay for Felix's "solo" trip to Italy, while secretly taking Elsa and her husband along. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] While Felix and Elsa stayed at a Grand Hotel, her husband was relegated to a small hostel nearby, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] where he botched a suicide attempt just days into the trip. The new couple's response? They gave him a bicycle and sent him on his way. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Felix, meanwhile, was still haunted by the specter of Oscar Wilde, writing: “He followed me across the sea into my sweetheart's chamber. […] dear hours of whispering love has he deprived me of by shooting satirical arrows between our lips.” Yet Elsa’s husband and Oscar were not the only ones standing in the new lovers’ way. Herman found out about the whole scam that Felix was playing and lured him to Bonn, where he was immediately arrested. With Felix in prison for a whole year (this was complicated; he was in prison for a whole year), Elsa was alone again, in Palermo of all places. As she writes: “The true trouble was the physical abstinence—it was excruciatingly painful to me. I had to make poems again!” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Not only that, she wrote letters to Felix to express her “sextrouble”, as she called it. She wrote – that she wrote to him these letters: “until he had to beg me to be less expressive, more conventional in my descriptions—for the sake of the prison officials becoming outraged or demoralized.” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] When Felix was released from prison, a newly henna-red-haired Elsa joined him with her two dogs, as the now prolific translator traveled across Europe, visited H.G. Wells who he was translating, ending up back in Berlin [SHOWS SLIDE], here in Fasanenstrasse, moving in across from August, her ex-husband. And they married in 1907.

[SHOWS SLIDE] Now, not only are Felix’ two novels from these years very strongly based on Elsa’s life and letters, it is also highly likely Elsa had a hand in his translations from the English, as a few years later Elsa was scheduled to do a translation of John Keats’ letters. By 1909, Felix had had enough of his nomadic life as a novelist and translator. So he staged his own suicide, like you do, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] and snuck off to America. In 1910, Elsa followed, $50 in hand, just enough to get her to Pittsburgh, where she met Felix and landed immediately in the pages of the *New York Times.* [SHOWS SLIDE] The headline projected behind me says, “She wore men’s clothes.” She was arrested for wearing trousers. The article says that Elsa explained that the pants helped her “walk better and keep up with her husband.” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] So, Felix took poor Elsa to Sparta, Kentucky [SHOWS SLIDE], but quickly fled to Canada alone, where he re-invented himself as Frederick Philip Grove, finally finding success and even winning a Governor’s General award, which is a very big deal in Canada. The Canadians would only find out he was German 25 years after his death. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

In 1913, Elsa picked up sticks from Kentucky and moved to New York [SHOWS SLIDE], where she met and, despite probably still being married to Felix, *married* the 11-years-younger Leopold Karl Friedrich Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven [SHOWS SLIDE], a Baron, and the impoverished black sheep of an aristocratic German family. Presto, the “Baroness” was born – and suddenly she was 28, not 39. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I know, it’s a life! On her way to City Hall to get married, she found an iron ring [SHOWS SLIDE] that she claimed was a symbol of Venus and made it into her first readymade, entitled *Enduring Ornament*.

Her marriage, however, did not endure, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] as Leopold left to reclaim his honor by fighting in WWI, taking all of Elsa's life savings with him (the asshat!) only to be intercepted on the Atlantic on the way to Europe, becoming a prisoner of war and killing himself four years after the war.

Alone, Elsa worked in factories to make a living, turning back to modeling in 1915 [SHOWS SLIDE], to earn a living. She earned a dollar an hour. Elsa was more and more turning her life into a work of art, though. [SHOWS SLIDE] Here she is posing in what seems to be her tiny studio. At the start of the war, European artists were flooding into the US, and Elsa soon crossed paths with the likes of Man Ray (who we met earlier), Alfred Stieglitz (who would photograph a lot of her pieces), and Marcel Duchamp (or, as she would later call him, Marcel *Dushit*). [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Duchamp, who coincidentally lived in the same building as Elsa, had just shown *Nude Descending A Staircase* – oh wait, [SHOWS SLIDE] this is where they lived, and [SHOWS SLIDE] this is *Nude Descending A Staircase,* very famous! And he just showed it to much controversy in New York and in Paris. And he was tired of painting, but he was so fascinated by Elsa's found-objects collection. He would go to her apartment and join her for a lot of late-night chats, like, "What is this? Is this art?"

[SHOWS SLIDE] At this point, Elsa shaved her head, sometimes lacquered it bright red, wearing yellow face powder, black lipstick, long ice-cream spoons as earrings, an inverted coal scuttle for a hat, a vegetable grater as a brooch, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] parrot-feathers as fake eyelashes, or even an electric taillight as her bustle, or on her bustle. "If cars can have them, why can't I?" she said. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

An artist Elsa once modeled for at that time wrote:

"Having asked me, in her harsh, high-pitched German stridency, whether I required a model, I told her that I should like to see her in the nude. With a royal gesture she swept apart the folds of a scarlet raincoat. She stood before me quite naked—or nearly so. Over the nipples of her breasts were two tin tomato cans, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] fastened with a green string around her back" – So the bra had just been invented a few years earlier, by Mary Phelps Jacob, by the way. "Between the tomato cans hung a very small birdcage and within it a crestfallen canary." [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Elsa would very often be arrested for her outrageous outfits [SHOWS SLIDE], not to mention the many, many times she was caught shoplifting. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] "Tired of official restraint, she leaped from patrol wagons with such agility that policemen let her go in admiration," Margaret Anderson wrote. With the war heating up, Germans were suspicious enough, so soon she was arrested as a spy and jailed for three weeks as "mentally deranged." There may have been some truth to this

latter accusation, as she had started to feed the rats in her apartment, but her art became more and more powerful.

Here's a visiting artist's description of her studio: "It was in an unheated loft on 14th Street. It was crowded and reeking with the strange relics she had purloined over a period of years from the New York gutters. Old bits of ironware, automobile tires, a dozen starved dogs, celluloid paintings, ash cans, every conceivable horror, which to her tortured, yet highly sensitized perception, became objects of formal beauty. And, except for the sinister and tragic setting, it had to me quite as much authenticity as, for instance, Brancusi's studio in Paris."

In 1917, Elsa created this piece [SHOWS SLIDE] out of plumbing supplies, entitled "God". Long credited to the work's photographer [SHOWS SLIDE], it reflected Elsa's feelings about the less than shameful and possibly even diving nature of bodily functions. She also published an essay of sorts on the topic in the *Little Review* [SHOWS SLIDE], which was a magazine at the time, which you can see behind me had the tagline, "Making no compromise with the public taste." Mm-hmm! [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] The same magazine that carried her radical poetry alongside Djuna Barnes, Hemingway, William Carlos Williams, and very famously a serialized version of James Joyce's *Ulysses* [SHOWS SLIDE]. In the essay, Elsa wrote: "Who wants us to hide our joys / If I can eat I can eliminate — it is logic — it is why I eat! My machinery is built that way. […] Why should I — proud engineer — be ashamed of my machinery [?] / If I can write — talk — about dinner — pleasure of my palate […] with my ease of manner — I can afford also to mention my ecstasies in toilet room!"

It was also in 1917 that the world first encountered this piece of plumbing: the famous urinal readymade [SHOWS SLIDE]. Submitted to the exhibition of the American Society of Independent Artists, it was signed, as you can see, R. Mutt. There are many reasons to question Duchamp's authorship of this work. The signature is gender neutral for one, and if it is a pun, it's a German one, right? For *Armut* (poverty) or Mutt R, *Mutter* (mother)? Or perhaps it's meant to be a drinking dish for one of her many dogs, mutts, right? Whatever the case, it certainly fits the Baroness's scatological found-object style.

The smoking gun, however, was found in a letter Duchamp wrote to his sister: "One of my female friends who had adopted the pseudonym Richard Mutt sent me a porcelain urinal as a sculpture; since there was nothing indecent about it, there was no reason to reject it," he wrote. [AUDIENCE BOOS]

I know, boo.

And Duchamp, in fact, only started to let it be associated with him after Elsa and Alfred Stieglitz, who originally photographed the piece, had died. It was also after Elsa's death that he somehow discovered the extra copies now shamelessly displayed under his name in the museums of Stockholm, San Francisco, London,

Kyoto, Paris, etc. [AUDIENCE BOOS] That's what I say.

By 1918, Elsa was still living in that dark tenement on 14th street, near the Hudson. She was enraptured by New York City though, creating this gorgeous piece called *Cathedral* [SHOWS SLIDE], a tribute to the jagged New York skyline. This was Elsa's most productive time, writing and working 24/7. Yet the artistic climate was changing: the *Little Review* lost its famous *Ulysses* lawsuit and was starting to play it safe, and the art world also wasn't open to Elsa's interventions.

In 1922, for instance, a gallerist was setting up an exhibition when one morning he found Elsa "had rehung the entire show, each picture at a different angle and one or two upside down, while others lay face down on the carpet, and she was now inveighing in the most truculent manner against the bourgeois spirit of a department store which, in hanging modern art, had achieved the uninspired symmetry of a parking lot." She was not about the white box, not Elsa.

Another artist, after hiring Elsa to write a review of his show, instead found her lecturing in the crowded gallery, wearing a dress covered in some 80 metal toys, a scrapbasket for a hat "with a simple but effective garnishing of parsley" and "7 small, starved, and terrified" dogs on a single leash. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

She was never paid for these performances, nor for any of her artistic work, only for her modeling work. When her resources in New York finally dried up, she was convinced that perhaps in Europe things would be better. Instead, she arrived in an extremely impoverished Berlin in 1923 [SHOWS SLIDE], finding herself unable to get a visa for Paris, where the Americans were having a blast without her. For once, her aristocratic name worked against her, and her husband's family did not respond to her many messages (or attempts at blackmail, as they called it). [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Out of options, she trooped into the French consulate on her 50th birthday:
"I went to the consulate with a large—sugarcoated birthday cake upon my head with 50 flaming candles lit—I felt just so spunky and affluent—! [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] In my ears I wore sugar plumes or matchboxes—I forget which. Also I had put on several stamps as beauty spots on my emerald painted cheeks and my eyelashes were made of gilded porcupine quills—rustling coquettishly—at the consul—with several ropes of dried figs dangling around my neck […]. I should have liked to wear gaudy colored rubber boots up to my hips with a ballet skirt of genuine gold-paper, white lacepaper covering it [to match the cake] but I couldn't afford that. I guess—that *inconsistency in my costume* is to blame for my failure to please the officials?" [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Um, her ploy did not work. And now that the Plötzes – remember her original family – had also disinherited her, Elsa was forced to sell newspapers to make rent [SHOWS SLIDE], standing for hours on end on this corner of Kürfurstendamm. In the fall of 1923, she wrote: "My impression about myself is very bitter – all is the

fault of being a woman – being an artist – and – only for the last reason I still linger on thinking – I still have a chance! For my art is there – I am there – but life is suspended."

After stints in a home for women and a psychiatric hospital, Elsa's last stop in Berlin was in Pankow [SHOWS SLIDE]. [AUDIENCE CHEERS] Yes! I mean, tragic also, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] to be honest.

Then, in 1926, an unexpected inheritance and an even more unexpected sudden visa brought her to Paris [SHOWS SLIDE], [AUDIENCE CHEERS] where she moved into a hotel with her three dogs (two of which she had to hide in a closet). And yet although Hemingway was championing her and Djuna Barnes was helping her edit her memoirs and her poetry, Elsa here still was forced to turn to modeling to survive [SHOWS SLIDE], now also teaching it. And although she received some funding from the Guggenheims, who were very impressed/baffled by her dada application that she handed in, she didn't realize she wasn't actually allowed to work on her visa, so she was expelled from France.

Yet, she didn't leave. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] instead hiding out at a dingy hotel [SHOWS SLIDE], where one night she did not turn off her gas before going to bed and was found the next morning alongside her dog. [AUDIENCE GROANS] I know, sorry, it's very sad. The funeral ceremony was attended by only a scattering of friends. Elsa's literary executor Djuna Barnes would provide the following obituary [SHOWS SLIDE]:

"On the 14th of December, sometime in the night, Elsa came to her death by gas, a stupid joke that had not even the decency of maliciousness. In most cases, death is neither more nor less than that which we must suffer, in some lonely instances it becomes high tragedy. […] She was, as a woman, amply appreciated by those who had loved her in youth, mentally she was never appropriately appreciated."

If you want to know more about Elsa [SHOWS SLIDE], check out Irene Gammel's biography called *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity* and the gorgeous edition of Elsa's writing called *Body Sweats* that Gammel edited with Suzanne Zelazo. I would like to leave you tonight with a poem of Elsa's called "Pastoral (Improved)" that she dedicated to photographer Berenice Abbott – I should say, lesbian photographer Berenice Abbott, she's pretty dope – who Elsa also made a visual portrait of [SHOWS SLIDE]. So this is the poem:

She's / Agape / Upsky —

Ogling / Wry —
Uncouth / Shape:

Quiltbeggarskirt —
Near / Pauperhome —

Upcountry —
Sitting / Sheaf —
Smoking / Surreptitious / Cigarette
—
This / Chill / Marcheve.

[SHOWS SLIDE] Well —

Say —
She —
Of / Pasty / Melancholy —
Trick / Memory —
Strolling Over / From / Pary —
Glooming / Downgermany —
Obsolete — — —

Spotting / Me —
Her / Mimicry / Sinister!
Some / Queer / Dope / Sister!
Don't / Mope —
Ole / Misanthrope!
I / Blame / Thy / Netherlipslope /
Not / One / Bit —
Kid —
Nope!

Unfortunate
That's / What / I / Calls / It!
I'm / Blue / As / Sin —
Hell —
In / My / Skin —
To / Contemplate / Such / Waggish
/ Minx' / Disembowled / Grin!
Curse / Thy / Pit
Shit!
I'll / Turn / In.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

SUSAN STONE: Florian Duijsens on Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, recorded at the Two Yellow Chairs Cafe as part of the Pankumenta festival from Bard College Berlin.

If you're looking out for any dressing up ideas for Halloween or just everyday life, I hope you got a good bit of inspiration from Elsa's creative wardrobe. I know I did. In German, I suppose that she'd be called a *Lebenskünstler* — I like to think of that as putting the two words together: life, artist. Her life was art. But it's really not, I suppose, the same meaning. How would you translate that, Katy?

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Oh, well, as somebody who gets through life by the skin of their teeth, I would say – by kind of using artful methods, let's say, yeah. It's quite a – sort of a term of endearment, but it's, uh, yeah, you wouldn't say it to your mom.

SUSAN STONE: Well I think that works for the Baroness as well, and I also guess it has maybe the meaning of hedonist, which works too?

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yeah, yes it does, actually! Yeah, thank you, yeah.

SUSAN STONE: And that works for her as well. I mean, the Baroness is a woman of many facets.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yes, certainly, yes. Many facets! You can see some of those facets of Elsa and other links where you can find out more about her and her art and life at our website, deadladiesshow.com/podcast. And you can follow us on social media @deadladiesshow and please share, rate, and review the show as it helps others to find our podcast!

SUSAN STONE: Yes, please do. The Dead Ladies Show was founded by Florian Duijsens and Katy Derbyshire. The podcast is created, produced, and edited by me, Susan Stone.

Thanks to Florian, and to Katy, and to all the Bard College Students who cheered their way onto the tape.

(Dead Ladies Show Music - ‘Little Lily Swing’ by Tri-Tachyon)

We’ll be back next month to introduce you to another fabulous Dead Lady. Thanks a lot! Bye-bye.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Bye-bye!

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Support for this episode of the Dead Ladies Show Podcast comes from the Berliner Senat.

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